

ABILITY NETWORK  
FIRST STEPS TRAVEL SURVEY

15 surveys were returned: 12 from Ability Network Providers and 3 others. Averages were calculated although there was much consistency. Providers from this survey drive an average of 30 miles (one way) from their home. 60% said they would drive further if they had several children in the same area. 73% said they would drive further if they received travel reimbursement. Providers stated that they would drive an average of 34 additional miles if they received reimbursement. They felt that \$20 (average) would be a fair reimbursement to travel 30 miles and \$33.50 (average) would be a fair reimbursement to travel 60 miles. Additional comments are below and many expressed their concern about gasoline increase and unpaid time on the road.

- 1. Currently what is the farthest you travel from your home (one way)?*  
*Average from below is 30.13 miles.*

1. 30 miles
2. 44 miles
3. 30 miles
4. 40 miles
5. 28 miles
6. 27 miles
7. 24 miles
8. 40 miles
9. 10 miles
10. 30 miles
11. 20 miles
12. 40 miles
13. 30 miles
14. 36 miles
15. 23 miles

- 2. Would you be willing to drive beyond your current distance if you had several children in the same area?*

Yes: 4 (27%)

No: 9 (60%)

No Answer: 2 (13%)

**3. Would you be willing to drive beyond your current distance if there was a travel reimbursement provided?**

Yes: 11 (73%)

No: 2 (13.5%)

No Answer: 2 (13.5%)

**4. If yes, how much further would you drive?  
Average from below is 33.75 miles**

1. 15-30 miles
2. no answer
3. up to 40 miles
4. 15-20 miles'
5. up to 50 miles
6. it depends
7. 40 miles one way
8. 20 miles
9. 10 miles
10. 30 miles
11. 50 miles
12. no answer
13. 20-25 miles
14. 50 miles
15. 45-60 miles

**4. What would be a fair travel reimbursement to travel 30 miles one way?  
Average from below is \$20**

1. 30 cents/mile or \$9
2. \$20
3. 36 cents/mile or \$10.80
4. \$20
5. \$35
6. \$31
7. \$40
8. My district pays 38 cents/mile or \$11.40
9. \$12.50
10. \$35
11. \$10
12. \$25
13. 30 cents/mile or \$9
14. no answer
15. \$11.25 (standard rate for Missouri State Employees)

**5. What would be a fair reimbursement to travel 60 miles one way?**  
**Average from below is \$39.49**

1. 35 cents/mile or \$21
2. \$40-\$50
3. 36 cents/mile or \$21.60
4. \$35
5. \$65
6. \$61
7. \$80
8. My district pays 38 cents/mile or \$22.80
9. \$25
10. \$60
11. \$20
12. \$50
13. 40 cents/mile or \$24
14. no answer
15. \$22.50 (standard rate for Missouri State Employees)

***Please add any comments you feel would be pertinent to ensuring appropriate and consistent services provided to the children and families enrolled in Missouri's First Step program.***

I am only traveling within a 30-mile radius of my home right now, however, I still put 150 miles a day when I provide services. The first child I see is 24 miles in one direction of my home (High Point), but the next two children I see are 28 miles in the other direction (Boonville). So I am actually driving 52 miles; then I go to Sedalia to see three children, which is 45 miles from Boonville, but only 28 miles from my home. I coordinate the children I serve to be close together so I am not going to the same town on different days. My concern is also the amount of time it takes out of my schedule to drive to these different locations. If I weren't in such a rural area, I could see more children; but as it is now, I am going all day long and able to see six children at the most; and traveling 150 miles without being paid for my time or gas which is \$2.80 a gallon. A point I would like to make is that even though I am not traveling more than 30 miles in one direction from my home; I am traveling a lot more than that. I love doing First Steps and feel like this is the best decision I have made for my career in a long time. However, instead of being able to do this full time which I would like, I signed a two-day a week contract with a local school because in the long run it pays better just because I am productive the entire workday.

I have turned down seeing many children due to lack of mileage reimbursement. The children I see now who are more than 15 miles away, are only seen one time a month. If paid travel, I would consider seeing more children and more often. I am only willing to drive the 40 miles to see a child now when I also have other work to do in the same town. I would not consider driving all that way just to see one child with current reimbursement. With the recent increase in travel expenses, it is not reasonable to expect traveling therapists to continue to see children in rural areas or cities where there are no providers in close proximity. Many children have gone without much needed services due to inadequate pay for professional services. These children are likely to come into the public schools requiring far more therapy and special needs. Thus it is more cost effective overall to have adequate services at an earlier age in the child's life.



I think the reason there is a shortage of providers is because of the travel reimbursement issue. I have spoken to several people who were interested in becoming providers until they realized there isn't any reimbursement for their travel.

With the cost of fuel, it is very unfair to expect providers to travel without reimbursement. Children are the ones who are paying the cost of not receiving services.

I live in a rural area. At this time, I do not drive over 30 miles because some of the homes are on back roads; and though it may only be 35 or so miles, it may take 45-60 minutes drive time. That means I'm on the road two hours before charging for the hour of service. This is not cost effective.

At the current gasoline prices, I would need 35 cents/mile in addition to my hourly rate to make it worthwhile. I figure that I could be using the same time to see another client, if it takes an hour to drive the distance round trip. If it takes an hour one way, I could see two clients in the time I am spending just to drive; therefore, I would need \$104.00 plus 35 cents/mile to compensate me for my time and travel expenses. I would be willing to do that if I am the only available qualified SLP able to serve that child.

Physical Therapists on average make \$35-\$50 an hour with benefits at traditional jobs. If you want quality people, you have to make the job worth the time of travel. I think this is especially true of the huge number of contract personnel. In addition, gas prices are not going down, so that has to be taken into account.

I am still amazed that people don't understand the economics of providing services in a rural area. For example, an Independent special instructor is paid \$42/hour. If I see a child just past "Smallville", I will drive 48 miles one way. It will take me more than an hour to get there. I will see the child for an hour and then drive home for an hour. Take the \$42 and subtract mileage (96 miles @0.375 per mile (State rate) = \$36. You now have \$6.00 for three hours of work--\$2.00 an hour. Even with NO mileage reimbursement, that is still only \$14/hour for a professional service. Last year I made \$5858.00, traveled 9150 miles and spent approximately 203 hours traveling for 183 contact hours. This calculates to right at \$15/hour, seldom traveling no more than 30 miles one way. Can you imagine what the figure would be if I traveled further?

I have heard comments from other providers that they no longer work with First Steps or are planning on quitting the program because of the payment delays. I have not had that problem since I am under contract with an agency but others feel that they should not have to be under a contract with an agency to be paid in a timely fashion.

I am enjoying my work with First Steps children and families, but have felt and continue to feel that the lack of mileage reimbursement is a negative aspect of providing these services. Travel is a must when working as an in-home therapist. To not be reimbursed for the mileage, particularly when gas prices are higher than ever, is a definite downfall. I think mileage reimbursement should be based on the current mileage reimbursement rate for the state (I think it is around 42 cents/mile?).

"No shows" should be able to be billed as full session, especially when travel is 30 miles or more. After all, that time has been reserved for that family.